

Good Morning, Senator Doyle, Representative Walker and distinguished members of the Human Services committee. I am here today to express concerns about **H.B. 5243 An Act Concerning Sober Homes.**

Three minutes isn't long enough to tell you the story of the ups and downs that have come my way.

While sitting at the desk next to the detox counselor who looked at me and said: "what's next?" I simply replied "Well, I guess I'll go out and get a job". He then responded to me and said: "where are you going to stay?" Not even realizing my words, or second-guessing my state of mind I replied; "the only place I can go is back underneath the bridge." His response was "I think I have a better idea, all I ask is that you make an investment into your own life!" I was always taught an investment was all about putting something in- so as to expect a big return on your investment. Since July 15, 1997 mine has been a belief that by making a personal investment in others the return would be greater than anything I could ever imagine.

I've been actively engaged in the Behavioral Health Field since 1998, and I have met many people with good intentions for the greater good of our society. And I have also seen those who have been about the role self-promotion and hidden objectives. Yet, I have learned that recovery is never a me thing "it's a we thing". I saw and still see the blight of so many like myself who had been homeless, previously incarcerated, and held captive by this disease of addiction. But yet had a better sense than I at the time to know that housing was their greater issue and challenge when it comes to living a clean and sober life. I remember bringing this to many people's attention in those early years of my recovery while working in the field. Yet, the universal response would always be "we know that it's a problem, but there's no funding for that". They were right and we were on the brink of something new. But like most of society we don't address issues when it's only a scare we have to wait until it reaches a proportion of an epidemic. Fortunately I learned and was given the opportunity to circumvent. No there's no funding but there is such thing as a having good credit. So through a first-time homebuyers program I purchased my first home (11/27/03) and named it the Gloria House in honor of my mother who passed away clean and sober and complications of the AIDS virus on Mother's Day weekend of 1995. January 1, 2004 we officially opened our doors and over the course of time for the past six years over 150 individuals have come through our doors.

We have 11 beds right smack in the heart of our community, which is right across the street from drug houses and drug dealing. It is a place that has become a haven of hope for so many. Why, even young children have been known to knock on our doors in the middle of the night asking us to come to their home because their mother or father isn't responding on the couch with a half empty bottle of vodka laying at their side. We have been available and housed Hurricane Katrina victims. Individuals during the hurricane that was dislocated because of the flood. We receive phone calls as far as California, Nevada, Mississippi, Texas, Ohio, and as close Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York and Massachusetts and the person(s) who lives next door or across street. All of which want to send their brothers, sons, uncles and fathers. All wanting to make an investment.

With the assistance of the Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery, other community entities and individuals who believe that recovery is possible. Every summer we hold a community cookout on the last Saturday of July. It began with only a 300 people for our initial cookout, since then it has had in attendance as many as 700+. And within that 700 we estimate that 60% of the individuals are still homeless and still actively engaged in addiction. Unlike most recovery houses we open our hearts and our house to the community, while detox and residential treatment programs place beds in reserve to make treatment and the journey to recovery available-just a phone call away. They say there is no 'wrong door'. This is not just words it must be action. We've made an investment.

Out of respect and on behalf of Dard, John, Kenny, James, Greg, Larry, David, Glenn, & **Pablo** (former and present house managers. Residents of Gloria House have gone on to become first-time homebuyers, start up small businesses i.e. construction co, repair garages, and restaurants. Most importantly the greatest success is that many of them have returned home once again "Head of Household". What a magnificent return on our investment!!!

Sincerely,

Rev. Dorian Grey Parker, D.B.S., DPh, DD, LADC, LCPT-D, LPPT-D, MATS, ICCS, ICCDP-D, ICADC, BCPC, BCCC
Founder-The Gloria House- part of the Havens of Hope Network

Please do not put in place a statute that may well jeopardize access to housing for persons striving to recover their lives and become productive members of society. Please consider working with DMHAS, the Recovery Housing Coalition of CT and the recovery community to accommodate communiy needs. Thank you.